

Observation

Consider the Morning Glory

Paul Ramsey

Consider the morning glories on the vine, how they grow; they toil not neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these [Matt. 6: 28, 29].

According to documents recently released by the CIA, an unidentified member of Princeton's chemistry department was paid \$765 to extract and study the alkaloids in a species of morning glory seeds. The chemist was supposed to test the efficacy of the lovely and lowly morning glory for producing agents affecting the central nervous system of human beings. It was part of the CIA's nationwide effort to learn how to control the human mind. Another researcher is alleged to have compiled in 1958 a comparison of American culture with that of an unnamed foreign country.

As a defense of these projects one might offer that at that time (the 1950's and early 1960's) researchers "were rather proud of their cooperation with the government." So stated one of this nation's great newspapers, the *Daily Princetonian*. Another defense is that the chemist did this on his own time. It was his own chosen use of his talents—like former Dean of the Faculty Douglas Brown helping to write federal Social Security legislation or my submission of a position paper to the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research. Still another defense is that there was reliable intelligence that the USSR was well along in research on agents to control the human mind. My colleague who tried (if indeed he did) to unlock the glory of the morning glory was practicing pre-emptive deflowering necessary for the common defense. Finally, one might say that if such research was done, it cannot happen again. It is now contrary to university policy to engage in research that must be kept secret and whose results cannot be immediately shared with a wider community of scholars.

The hullabaloo on the Princeton campus and in the country generally over the latest revelations about CIA projects reminded me of my own scholarly activities as a member of the faculty of Princeton University over that

same period of time. I too was conducting certain investigations. Not in the laboratory, but out of books and articles. There was nothing secret about it, and the only human experimentation involved was sitting on my fanny for long hours thinking about the possible meaning of the "just war" tradition when applied to modern warfare and weapons technology. Cross my heart and hope to die, I was never paid by the CIA.

More than once in recent weeks I have had occasion to wonder over the irony of all this. I have also sorrowed over the pathos of a people, of a major power, and of our churches that steadfastly refuse to think very seriously about the morality of warfare (with congruent weapons) lest war become thinkable again. By fixing our minds on other national goals we imagine we have "prioritized" out of existence the reality of war and weapons systems. We succeed only in excluding war from the world we think about. What is out of mind is the urgent need to impose some justifiable limits upon war should it occur, and upon preparations for defense that constantly go on without waiting for the last resort. As a result, research efforts aimed at humanizing warfare by making it less lethal are made to look like a great scandal.

All this needs to be sorted out. For the sake of orderly reflection let us set aside, first, the fact that the CIA may have sponsored the investigation that looked into the properties of the morning glory. Myself, I have always thought it a "likely tale" that Daniel Ellsberg was a CIA agent sent in there to purloin the Pentagon Papers and give them to the *New York Times*. While such a scenario is doubtless partly a product of my conspiratorial mentality, it is supported by my observation that in the Pentagon Papers the CIA reports came off better than all other sources of intelligence, and its recommendations and warnings to our policymakers were, at least, better than those from other sources.

Let us set aside, secondly, the fact that the research was secret. Perhaps our universities and their faculties ought not to engage in secret research for the government or for drug companies that have a property-interest in the policy. This defends the objectivity and purity of the university as an